

See You Tomorrow by Teadum

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Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Max (Stranger Things), Mike Wheeler, Original Female Character(s), Reader, Will Byers

Relationships: Jim "Chief" Hopper/You

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Summary:

While you're staying with your sister Karen and her family you meet a certain police chief when he arrives to drop off his daughter.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Listen, if y'all ain't gonna write me Hopper x Reader fics I guess I just gotta do it my own dang self. This is a long one and it was only meant to be a one-shot...but dammit if I'm not going to have to write at least a part two now. I don't know when that'll happen though since I've still got my Lucifer fic going on, but I may be more motivated to write it faster with lots of comments.... ;)

(Seriously though hit me up I need constant validation and encouragement I'm an actual pomeranian irl)

It had only been a few days since you started staying with your sister Karen and her family while you looked for a place in Hawkins, but you already found there were some things you liked more than others. For example, you liked spending time with your nieces and nephew. Nancy was so smart, and you loved hanging out with her and listening to all her teenage gossip and her hopes for the future. Holly was still little and sweet, and making her laugh was simple but felt so rewarding. Then there was Mike; truthfully you enjoyed spending time with him the most. You were a total nerd as a kid, and while Karen was the pretty, popular one--similar to Nancy, but with a bit less studying--you had always been the outcast, just like Mike and his friends. You loved hanging out and listening to him explain the details of his game or discussing Star Wars, and you loved seeing him have fun with all his friends; all of whom knew you as Mike's "cool aunt y/n."

Then again, there were things you didn't love; like Karen's stuffy husband Ted, or having to listen to Karen go on and on about how you'd thrown your youth away on school, or how you made a huge mistake leaving Hawkins, or how you were making an even bigger one moving back. You and your sister were total opposites; aside from her being over a decade older than you(your parents referred to you as a "happy accident") she had always been more focused on

being perfect: perfect hair, perfect makeup, perfect house, perfect family. You had gone the college route and had been teaching in Indianapolis ever since; not-so-perfect apartment, not-so-perfect job, not-so-perfect family(as in, none), not-so-perfect life. She had always nagged you about living in the city, but now she was nagging you about coming home. Even though you'd found a good job at the high school, Karen was insistent that you'd never meet a good man here, which seemed to be the only thing that mattered to her. You loved your sister, but you were definitely over hearing her act like your mother. So when she asked you to watch the kids while she and Ted went on a weekend business trip you were practically pushing them out the door.

Nancy had gone to stay with one of her girlfriends and Holly had gone to bed early, leaving just you and Mike; and of course all of Mike's friends. Dustin, Lucas, Will, and a girl you'd never met named Max were all downstairs playing D&D, and Mike said another girl was on her way. You were surprised that the group had added two new members, even more so that they were girls, but you were happy that they were making new friends their age. You also couldn't help but smile when you thought about the excited look on Mike's face when he talked about El.

You were cutting the cake you'd made into slices when the doorbell rang. You quickly set the knife down and headed to the door, feeling a chilly gust of wind as you opened it revealing two people on the other side. You noticed the girl first; about Mike's age with big, brown curls and inquisitive dark eyes staring up at you cautiously. Behind her stood a tall man in a police uniform. His handsome, bearded face set in what looked like a permanent scowl. Though, when he caught sight of you his look went from mild annoyance to obvious surprise.

"Hello!" You greeted them both, smiling. You looked down at the girl, who looked at you suspiciously. "You must be El; it's so nice to meet you! I'm Mike's aunt y/n; Mike's told me a lot of great things about you." You offered her your hand, which she stared at silently for a long moment before finally accepting. You shook her hand lightly before letting go; she seemed totally confused by the gesture, which you thought was adorable. "Mike and the gang are downstairs

waiting for you." You said cheerfully, stepping to the side. She walked in, not taking her eyes off you until she had reached the basement stairs. She seemed a bit odd, but if Mike liked her you knew she must be a good girl. You quickly turned your attention back to the man standing on the doorstep. "You must be El's father, Mr...?"

"Hopper--Chief Jim Hopper." He replied very quickly, offering you his hand. "And you are...?"

"I'm y/n; I'm Karen's younger sister. I'm watching the kids this weekend." You said, taking his outstretched hand. He gave you a firm handshake before letting go; at least he knew what a handshake was. He stared at you silently, and you smiled, unsure of what to say. He looked like he wanted to speak, but couldn't seem to find the right words "Um, would you like to come inside? It's pretty cold out there; I can make you some coffee if you want?" You offered, gesturing into the house.

"That sounds great, if you don't mind." He said, taking off his hat as he stepped into the house.

"Not at all." You said with a smile, closing the door behind him. You head into the kitchen, Hopper following close behind. You went over to the coffee maker and began to brew some coffee as Hopper looked around the kitchen until his eyes stopped on the cake. You turned around as the coffee started to brew and noticed him staring. "You want some? I made it for the kids but there's plenty if you'd like a slice to go with your coffee." You said, not waiting for him to answer as you moved over to grab plates out of the cabinet.

"It looks amazing; though it's definitely going to ruin my diet." He said with a smile. You smiled back and laughed a bit at the image of someone like him being on a diet; you thought he looked fine--very fine; great even. You walked back over to the cake, two plates in hand, and put a slice of cake on each one before sliding one plate in front of him. "So, are you just in town for the weekend?"

"I actually just got a teaching job at the high school, so I'm staying with Karen until I get a place sorted out." You said absently, grabbing a couple forks out of the silverware drawer. You handed one to him.

"Oh." He said, a small smile on his lips. He took a bite of cake and groaned in approval "This cake is delicious." He said, mouth still full of cake. You smiled back.

"Thank you; I was never much of a cook, but I can make a pretty mean dessert." He took another bite of cake, clearly enjoying it, before speaking again.

"So what subject do you teach?"

"English." You replied before taking a bite of cake yourself. "I'll have Mike and the others in my class in a couple years actually; is El in their grade too?" You ask, moving to grab two coffee cups as the pot finished filling with the dark, fragrant liquid.

"It's kind of complicated; she's their age but she's not in school at the moment. I sort of adopted her from a bad situation, so she's pretty far behind in her education. I'd like to keep her in the same grade as her friends, but I'm not sure she'll be ready before the next school year." You looked up from the two cups of coffee you'd just poured. Hopper was rubbing the back of his neck, looking tired. You brought the cups over to the table and sat down, offering him one. You wanted to ask about why he had decided to adopt her, or about her situation before, but you didn't feel it was your place to ask a total stranger about something so personal.

"Have you ever thought about getting her a tutor? I mean, the next school year is awhile away; maybe if she gets some extra help she can catch up." You suggested, taking a small sip of your coffee.

"Yeah, but this is a small town; the only tutor's you can really find are other teenagers, most of which I don't trust." He replied, taking a large gulp of coffee.

"I could do it if you want." You weren't really thinking about doing it yourself when you'd suggested it, but the words just slipped out before you really had the chance to think them through. "I mean I know you don't really know me or anything, but my nephew seems to really like her--he's told me all about her, actually--she seems like a sweet girl, and she will be one of my students eventually. Of course, if you're not comfortable with it I completely understand; I just

thought I'd offer." You added quickly; you barely knew this guy, why did you have to go make it weird?

"Would you really do that?" He said, looking at you with an optimistic smile. You hadn't considered that he'd really be that interested in your offer. It was sweet, how he worried about his daughter; you knew plenty of dads who weren't nearly this involved.

"Well sure, I don't mind. I mean, teaching is kind of what I do. I'm always happy to help out a student who wants to learn; and getting some brownie points with my nephew and the chief of police certainly couldn't hurt." You joked, smiling as you took another sip of coffee.

"That would really help us out--there's only so much I can help her with, you know? Kids today are a lot smarter than I was at their age. Honestly, those kids are probably smarter than I am now." He said, gesturing towards the basement.

"They're a pretty special bunch, aren't they?" You said, smiling.

"Yeah, they really are." Hopper said, smiling back at you. You sat in silents for a moment, staring and smiling at each other. He really was a good-looking man, and he seemed like a really caring parent. You finally looked away, blushing a bit at your thoughts as you cleared your throat.

"So, um, I can start tutoring her whenever it's convenient for you; I won't actually be starting my new job for another month, so aside from house hunting I'm pretty free. She could come here, but that may be a bit...distracting, with Mike here. Maybe we could go to the library? Or if it's easier I could just go to your house?" You asked.

"Well we're trying to keep her away from public spaces for awhile because of the situation she came from before, so our place would probably be best. You can start whenever you want; I work during the day but I'm home in the evenings so, you know, just whenever's best for you." He said, taking another long drink of coffee.

"If she is behind I would imagine the sooner I started the better it would be for her, assuming she's comfortable with me helping her

out. Why don't you talk to her about it on your way home tonight, and then you can just call me tomorrow about it?" You suggested.

"Works for me." He said, smiling at you. You smiled back, and once again you sat in silence staring at each other. You chose to believe your increased heart rate was due to the sudden intake of sugar and caffeine, and tried to ignore it.

"I should, um--I should call the kids to come eat this cake; if I wait too long the sugar rush will keep them up all night." You said, grabbing several more plates out of the cabinet and more forks from the drawer.

"Oh right, of course." Hopper said, clearing his throat; you thought maybe he was blushing a little bit too. He grabbed your now empty plates and moved them to the sink, putting your coffee cups by the coffee pot. You moved toward the basement entrance, but stopped before you headed down and looked back at Hopper.

"I'm sure you weren't planning to hang here when you dropped El off but if you, um, don't have anything else going on you're more than welcome to stay until they're done with their game; save yourself an extra trip?" You asked a bit nervously. You were surprised at how much you were hoping he'd stay.

"I don't want to impose." He replied.

"Oh you're not really--like, at all. I was just going to be listening to records and looking through the housing ads." You replied quickly; much quicker than you'd meant to.

"Well, if you really don't mind I think I'll take you up on that offer." He said, smiling as he moved to take off his heavy coat, moving towards the front door to hang it on the coat rack. You turned and headed down the stairs, hiding the big dumb grin on your face. You found the kids engrossed in a very intense looking game of D&D, but as soon as you said the word 'cake' they stampeded up the stairs into the kitchen. You headed back up, and once everyone had scrambled around, getting a plate, cake, fork, and finding a place to stand around the kitchen, you asked them about their game.

"We started off great, but now we're getting our asses kicked." Dustin said through a bite of cake, shaking his head.

"You can still come back." Mike said, nearly finished with his cake already.

"Easy for you to say." Lucas said under his breath.

"Whatever, a better question is what's he still doing here?" Mike asked, pointing to Hopper with his fork. The kids all turned to look at Hopper, who shifty under the gaze of a pack of suspicious teenagers.

"I invited him in for coffee since he drove all this way to drop El off." You said simply; you had dealt with teenagers for years, and you knew exactly where this was going.

"Well, looks like you two had coffee, so...?" Max said with a knowing smile, raising her eyebrow at you as she leaned on the counter next to El, who continued to stare at you suspiciously.

"Well it seems silly now for him to drive home just to have him turn around and come back, right?" You said, hopeful they'd drop it.

"Uh huh, especially after you took the time to get something sweet, right?" Dustin said, looking at Hopper. He was referring to the cake, but his eyebrows wiggled up and down before he made a strange, purring sound. You definitely couldn't hide your blush after that.

"Isn't it a bit late in the evening for a coffee date?" Will asked innocently; you weren't even sure if he meant to tease you like the others, or if he was really just curious.

"Listen here you little punks, this was not--this was just two strangers introducing themselves; I'm the chief of police, I should know everyone in town--particularly when El's spending time around them." Hopper jumped in, clearly tired of the kids accusations.

"Oh my gosh," Dustin said, totally ignoring Hopper. "If Mike's aunt marries El's dad, would that make Mike and El related?" Mike and El looked at each other, horrified at the thought. There was a group "ew" as all the kids made disgusted faces. You buried your face in your hands; unable to hide the embarrassment that was written all

over your face.

"Downstairs, now!" Hopper roared. The kids all jumped, throwing their empty plates on the counter as they scurried to head back downstairs, laughing the whole way. Once they were gone the kitchen grew silent.

"I am so sorry." You said, trying to get your blush under control as you looked over at him.

"What are you apologizing for? They were just being dumb kids; I take back what I said before." He said, grabbing the discarded plates and putting them in the sink. He turned on the hot water, waiting for it to get warm before plugging the sink and adding soap.

"Oh you don't need to do that; I'll wash them later." You said, moving over to his side next to the sink.

"Hey don't worry about it; you made the cake after all, the least I can do is help you with the cleanup." He said, smirking over at you.

"But..." You really didn't want him to go out of his way; he was a guest after all.

"Okay how about we compromise; I wash and you dry?" He offered. You stood there a moment, pretending to think it over, then smiled.

"Alright, I suppose that's fair." You said, grabbing a dish towel. You spend the next few minutes doing dishes together. After he finished scrubbing a plate he'd hand it off to you, and you'd dry it and put it away before grabbing the next one. Despite it being such a boring, everyday task, you found it helped to ease the awkward tension from before, and you were glad he'd suggested it.

The rest of the night went by quickly; you and Hopper sat in the living room listening to records and talking. You structured the conversation around the kids; him telling you about his daughter, and you praising your nephew and his friends. It seemed simple enough, but in between you both managed to work in tidbits about yourselves; your life in Indianapolis, how he used to live in New York, how you missed Hawkins, how he was glad he came back and

never wanted to leave, how you were both single. When the clock struck ten, you jumped.

"Oh geez, is it that late already? I should probably check on the kids; I don't even know who was supposed to be sleeping here." You said, getting up off the sofa and heading down the stairs. Hopper followed behind you, checking in on El. They were sitting around the table, still deep in their game. They all went silent and looked up as the two of you descended into the basement, "Okay, who's staying over?" You asked. Everyone, including El, raised their hands. You looked over at Hopper, who scowled. You looked back over at El, who looked at you pleadingly; at least she was past glaring at you suspiciously. You wanted to be on her good side, and truthfully seeing Hopper again tomorrow sounded pretty nice. "You know, the girls could share Nancy's room." You suggested, shrugging nonchalantly. The kids all smiled at you and looked over at Hopper hopefully. He looked back at their eager faces and sighed, defeated.

"Alright fine, she can stay." Hopper said, his voice sounded annoyed, but he looked over at you and gave you a knowing smile. The kids cheered and fist pumped as he headed back up the stairs.

"He's a lot nicer with y/n around; maybe it wouldn't be so bad if they dated." You heard Lucas say as you headed up the stairs.

"Well I guess I should get going then." Hopper said after you'd reach the top.

"I promise I'll return her safe and sound tomorrow." You said, smiling reassuringly at him. He smiled back.

"Yeah I know you will." He stared down at you for a moment, then finally he opened the door. Before he walked off the porch, he turned back to you and said, "See you tomorrow."

"See you tomorrow." You replied.

2. Chapter 2

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey howdy hey, sup my dudes?

So I've been pretty busy as I switched jobs recently, so as much as I desperately wanted to update sooner I've not really had time. ((ALSO MY SISTER HAD A BABY AND IT'S THE CRAZIEST BIRTH STORY I'VE EVER HEARD OMG)). I'm also working on writing a book so...when I have the motivation to do that I tend to lean in that direction because I haven't been motivated to write one of my original stories in awhile and I need to do that when I get the urge. HOWEVER, I should now have an overabundance of free time so hopefully I can update more often. ((For those of you who may also be reading my Lucifer fic...it's coming, I promise...soon...I'm so sorry))

Also THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH for the comments and all the support for this; y'all are clearly starving for Hopper love because this thing blew UP waaaaay more than I was expecting.

Tomorrow came quickly, and you were in an uncharacteristically good mood when you rolled out of bed early. You got Holly up and made sure she was safe and secure in her highchair before starting on breakfast. You had just finished making loads of bacon, eggs, pancakes, and Eggos when the kids slowly began to descend from upstairs. You gave them each a cheerful "good morning" to which you mostly received less-than-enthusiastic grunts in response. They all piled around the table as they ate their breakfast between yawns and stretches. As you made a small plate for Holly, you made sure to add some eggs and bacon to El's plate, not wanting to send her home filled with nothing but Eggo's. By the time the food was gone the gang had woken up considerably, and were exchanging plans for an arcade trip. After some deliberation, they decided to split up and reconvene later that afternoon.

Lucas and Dustin got on their bikes headed home on their own. You offered to take Will and Max home; knowing the girl lived too far to walk, and that Joyce Byers hadn't allowed Will to go home alone after the "incident" had happened. You told the kids to go get ready, so you could take them as soon as Hopper came to pick up El. You smiled to yourself as you zipped up Holly's puffy coat, thinking about seeing the police chief again. After he'd left the night before, you spend more time than you'd like to admit thinking about him. It was so rare to see a dad be so concerned and so involved in his kids life--particularly his daughter's--and knowing that Hopper had adopted her from a bad situation was an even bigger statement towards his character. Not to mention how much he seemed to care about the other kids as well, and how seriously he took his work as Chief of Police. He was funny, charming, and had great taste in music. You also couldn't help but notice he was incredibly handsome and looked good in uniform. The more time you spent thinking about him, the more you began to realize you'd developed a bit of a crush. It was a bit embarrassing--having something as juvenile as a "crush" at your age--but you secretly hoped maybe he was feeling the same way.

Just as you finished putting on Holly's boots, a knock on the front door makes you jump. Your heart leapt up in your chest as you moved to answer it. On the other side stood Chief Jim Hopper, hands in coat pockets and his aviators on. He instantly smiled when he saw you, making your heart pound so loud you were afraid he would hear it.

"Good morning." You said, a shy smile playing on your lips.

"Good morning." He replied, his smiling growing wider. You stood staring at each other for a moment. You weren't totally sure how these silent moments kept happening, but you couldn't complain. The silence was broken by a disgusted noise coming from behind you. You quickly whirl around to see Mike rolling his eyes. You blushed slightly as you cleared your throat.

"Oh good, you guys are ready--Chief Hopper is here to pick up El." You said, smiling at your nephew. He glared past you at Hopper, but said nothing. El came around from behind Mike to stand next to you. She looked at you, then back at Hopper, before looking at you again. "It was very nice meeting you El; you'll have to come back soon and

visit." You smiled down at her.

"Yes; soon." Was all she said. To your surprise, she leaned in and hugged you. In your shock, you look over at Hopper; he gave you a big smile, then shrugged in response. The hug only lasts a few moments before she pulled away and headed outside without another word. It had definitely been unexpected, but you were glad she was accepting you and you smiled as you watched her take her place behind Hopper.

"Well-"

"So uh,-"

You both began talking at once, stopping at the same time to look at each other, blushing slightly. You heard another disgusted noise from Mike, followed by Max snickering.

"You first." You said, trying to be polite.

"I uh--" he cleared his throat, "I was thinking--or well, hoping, maybe--I mean if you're not busy--I was wondering if you'd like to have dinner tomorrow night?" Hopper asked, looking down at the ground as he fidgeted with his beard. After a few seconds of silence he looked up at you, your face flushed and totally stunned. He caught sight of the kids standing behind you and saw a similar expression on their faces. "Oh no--I didn't mean--it's not that I, well I mean that is I don't not want--but I just--I mean El will be there too obviously so--" He cleared his throat again to stop his stumbling. "What I meant was would you like to have dinner with us as a thank you for taking care of El, and so we could discuss the tutoring?" He clarified, blushing. You tried to suppress your blush as you responded.

"Oh, of course--to discuss tutoring. That's an excellent idea; tomorrow night is great." You smiled and tried to seem like it hadn't totally fazed you. Truthfully you were more than willing to accept a dinner invitation from him no matter what the circumstances, but you admit you were almost a bit disappointed by the clarification.

"Great! I'll, um--I'll call you about it tonight, okay?" He said, still a bit flustered.

"Tonight. Got it; sounds good." You replied. El took this as the end of your conversation and began walking to the car, dragging Hopper along with her. He waved as he left, and you waved back. Even if you were a bit disappointed, you were still more than a little excited.

You took Will and Max home and headed back to your sister's house. You played with Holly most of the morning until she finally went down for a nap. Mike left a little after that, heading to the arcade, and you were left to your own devices. You looked through the housing ads for the 50th time; there were some good options, but they were all a bit big for just you. You decided to drop it for now and went to the kitchen to make a pie for dessert tonight. Holly eventually woke up and you were once again at her mercy, then Nancy came home, followed closely by Mike. Before you knew it, it was time to make dinner. You made spaghetti, and got through the dinner with no incidents. You were still impressed by how much better Nancy and Mike seemed to be getting along recently. When you asked them about it, they both looked away, claiming to have no clue what you were talking about.

Once everyone had eaten and the dishes were done, the phone in the kitchen began to ring. You took a couple deep breathes before answering with a simple, "Hello?"

"Hey, it's Hopper." You smiled to yourself.

"Hi Hopper." You replied quickly. He added in his own "Hi" and you two were once again left in silence. It was less nice without being able to stare at each other, you noticed.

"So, um...dinner? Tomorrow?" You asked after a moment, not really sure how to phrase the question.

"Right! Well, I'm not the best cook, but I was thinking I could make something for us here; so you'll know where the house is. El will be here too of course. I was thinking I could pick you up around 7, if that works for you?"

"Seven sounds perfect; Karen and Ted should be home before then so I won't have to watch the kids."

"Great; that's great." He said, clearing his throat. "So, I'll see you tomorrow at 7."

"Yup, see you tomorrow."

Tomorrow went by at a sluggish pace; no matter what you did time seemed to drag. You were responsible for the kids until about 1:00, when Karen and Ted arrived home. After that you kept trying to do things to kill time. You decided to make some dessert to take with you; you were worried it may be a bit too stereotypical given Hopper's profession, but you ended up making some homemade fried donuts. After you finished up, you took a shower, spent at least an hour choosing your clothes, looked through the ads again, listen to some records, then finally did your hair and put on a bit of makeup. It wasn't a date, not really, but there was no harm in looking nice for dinner, right?

You went down stairs with about a half hour to spare. Karen was in the kitchen, getting dinner ready. She looked you up and down, clearly a bit surprised.

"You look nice y/n." She said, a smile playing on her lips.

"You think so?" You asked as you looked down at your dress. It wasn't anything fancy, but you wanted to look a little more put together than usual. Karen's eyebrow arched at your response.

"So who is he?" She asked, looking up from the meatloaf she'd just pulled from the oven. Your head shot up to look at her.

"What?"

"Who's the guy?" She said, smiling.

"T-there's no guy." You said, trying not to blush. She just kept smirking at you, and you swallowed the lump in your throat. "Well I mean there is a guy--but it's not like that." She continued to stare at you with her knowing smile. She knew damn well what she was doing, riling you up with her stupid smug looks. Just like when you were a kid.

"So what is it like then?" She asked.

"Well, actually I'm going to help tutor his kid--that's it, nothing conspicuous."

"So you're wearing a dress and makeup to tutor his kid at 7 O'clock at night?" She replied, clearly enjoying herself. You blushed slightly.

"N-no! He--they--invited me over for dinner to discuss the tutoring and to thank me for taking care of El while she was here the other night." Karen's back straightened slightly.

"El? You mean Mike's little friend?" She asked, squinting at you. "Wait; are you have dinner with Hopper?"

"Like I said; the dinner is totally kosher, it's just to talk about tutoring." You relayed again, not sure what this sudden new mood of hers was about.

"But you like him." She said, stating more than asking. She didn't seem to be teasing you anymore, which surprised you.

"Well, I mean...maybe?" You groaned, setting down and laying your head against the kitchen table. "I don't know; I mean I just met him, and we only talked for a little bit. But he was so sweet, and charming--and he's funny, and handsome--"

"Oh my God." Karen said, coming to sit down in the chair next to you. "You really like him, don't you?"

You replied after a long silence. "I think I do."

"y/n" Karen said, putting a hand on your shoulder. "I'm happy for you, really--lord knows you need a man in your life--but; just be careful, okay?" She said kindly. You lifted your head from the table.

"What does that mean?" You asked, somewhat tartly.

"Well, it's just that Hopper doesn't have the best reputation; I mean I know he's been better the past year, but before he was constantly drunk and sleeping around with all the single women in town. He seems to have cleaned up his act for now, but men are prone to falling into old habits." She said, grabbing your hand in both of hers. "I just don't want to see you get hurt." You instantly snatched your

hands away.

"I don't know how he was before, but he's not like that now." You said, standing up. "And anyway this isn't even a date; I'm just tutoring his kid alright? He's probably not even interested in me anyway."

"y/n." Karen addressed you as she stood up. Before she could say anything more, there was a loud knock on the door. You looked at the doorway to the living room, then back at Karen who was looking at you apologetically. You felt a twinge of guilt for snapping at her, but didn't really want to apologize right now. You grabbed the box of donuts off the counter and left the kitchen without a word. You grabbed your coat off the coat rack and put it on as you opened the door. There was Hopper, standing in the doorway yet again. His breath was visible in the cold night air, and his cheeks had a bit of a flush from the wind. Seeing him melted away all the negative feeling that were hanging around your heart. You smiled up at him, and he smiled back. You stood in another one of your quiet moments, until a loud snore from Ted, asleep in the recliner, broke you from your trance.

"I hope you're hungry." He said finally.

"Starving." You said with a smile.

The ride to Hopper's place was quiet but comfortable. You tried to pay attention to where you were so you could get there on your own, but without meaning to you kept glancing over at Hopper as he drove. He had a content smile on his handsome face, one hand on the wheel with the other setting on his thigh, which was looking very nice in a pair of jeans. You blushed and looked back out the window, hoping he didn't catch you staring. After awhile you pull up to the small cabin in the woods. You both get out and Hopper leads you up to the door, holding it open for you as you smiled and walked in. The cabin was small but cozy, and you saw El sitting on the couch in the center. She stood up when she saw you come in, walking over to the table to sit down.

"Good evening El." You said.

"Good evening." She parroted. You smiled at her; she was just so cute.

Hopper reached out to take your jacket, before taking off his hat and coat and setting them aside. You had never seen him out of uniform before; he looked good in his blue flannel shirt and jeans. He looked even better as he began rolling his sleeves up, exposing his forearms. You turned away to stop from staring.

"Go ahead and sit down; I'll get the food ready." He said, motioning with a nod for you to sit at the table.

"Okay, thank you." You said, feeling a bit shy. "Oh! I brought some dessert-I hope it's not too cliché, but I made donuts." You add, moving over to hand him the box. He grinned down at you, your heart suddenly felt like melted butter.

"That's great; I know it should go without saying since I'm a cop, but I definitely enjoy a good donut." He said as he took the box, shooting a quick wink. You felt a wave of heat roll down your spin as you spun to move back to the table, trying desperately to hid your blush.

"I hope you like lasagna." He said, dipping out three servings.

"I do."

"Good; El helped me make it so it should be excellent." He set a plate down in front of El and you, then went back to get his own plate.

Once Hopper had sat down, the three of you began eating. It was delicious, a point you were sure to make to El, who looked very proud of herself. You hadn't really seen her smile much, but throughout the course of the meal she began to open up to you more. She didn't speak as much as you'd expect a 13-year-old to, but she kept up with the conversations and made sure to jump in when she felt it necessary. You started of talking about the kids again, El and Mike, before moving on to talking about the tutoring. You worked out a schedule to come over in the evenings starting the next day; Hopper seemed pleased to know you'd be around when he was there, giving you a small sense of hope that maybe he shared the feelings you did. After you worked out the logistics of the situation, it was time for dessert. Hopper praised the donuts up and down, saying they were the best he'd ever had--and that was saying a lot, since he'd had quite a few. After awhile, you noticed El's head beginning to wilt.

Hopper followed you gaze.

"Hey kiddo, why don't you head to bed? You'll have plenty of time to hang out with y/n when she comes to tutor you." He said, ruffling the girl's hair. She looked reluctant to leave, but finally got up.

"Good night." She said, voice sleepy. You both said your goodnights to her before she headed into her room.

"She's sweet." You said absently, looking at the door she'd disappeared behind.

"Yeah, she's a good kid." Hopper replied, a proud smile across his face. You looked over at him, and he looked at you, that familiar comfortable silence hanging in the air. You had never met anyone you were so content to be silent with.

"I should probably get back." You said reluctantly.

"Right; sorry to keep you so late." He replied. Neither of you were quick to get up, but finally you managed to will yourself to stand. You went to get your coat, Hopper following behind you.

You were heading back, staring at the stars in the clear night sky, when Hopper cleared his throat.

"I never asked how much you wanted--for the tutoring I mean."

"Huh?" You asked looking over at him. You were a bit tired, and didn't register the question right away. "Oh. You don't need to worry about it; I don't mind helping out. I have my salary from the school so it's not like I'm hurting for money, and I'd feel bad taking yours when you've got El to take care of as well as yourself."

"No way; I'm not letting you do all this extra work for nothing." He replied, clearly ready to argue the point if necessary.

"Just make me dinner the nights I'm around and we'll call it even." He looked like he wanted to debate the point further, but you smiled over at him and he decided to let it go for now.

"Alright--I'll make sure they're damn fine dinners though."

The rest of the ride was quiet, and before you knew it you were back in front of Karen's house.

"Thanks again for dinner; it was delicious." You said, looking over a Hopper.

"No problem." He smiled at you. "So, we'll see you tomorrow?"

"Yeah, see you tomorrow."

3. Chapter 3

Notes for the Chapter:

Look at me updating in a timely fashion like an adult; bet you guys weren't expecting that, huh? Haha; yeah me neither.

Honest to gosh this is the fluffiest thing I've ever written; this whole series is just one giant word pile of personal gratification and I ain't even mad like I know it's cheesy but I love it so like I genuinely don't care? I'm old and bitter and I just want everyone to be happy??

Once again, I so appreciate all the love and support I've been getting from you guys; it genuinely makes my day when I receive even one new comment. It is also super motivating so thank you thank you thank you for all the kudos and comments.

The next few weeks went by quickly, and you had never enjoyed yourself so much.

At first you had only planned to tutor El a few times a week, but after working with her that first night you realized for her to catch up in time you were going to have to work with her every day. Hopper had initially protested the idea of you doing so much extra work, but since you weren't starting your new job for another month you convinced him that, at least for now, it wouldn't be an inconvenience. You started making a schedule of what you would work on with her and when; you knew where the state standards expected her to be next year and tried to work with those guidelines in mind.

Your days became very busy; looking at houses, making up lesson plans, both for El and for your upcoming high school classes, and grading the homework you left El every night. Sometimes if you were free, you'd go visit El during the day just to spend time with her so she wasn't always on her own. You'd talk about things that she couldn't really talk to Hopper about, and you two began to grow

close. Even when you went over in the evenings, it was always before Hopper finished work. You'd go over the previous days homework with her and show her what she needed to revisit, and praise her for how well she was doing and how hard she was trying. You knew she was desperate to be with her friends, and you wanted more than anything to help make that happen.

After working with her for an hour or so, Hopper would come home; all smiles as soon as he'd see the two of you. He'd go change and start making dinner while you kept working with El until the food was ready. Dinners were fun and lively; you'd each talk about your days, making jokes about the ridiculous things Hopper had to deal with at work, or how you were 100% sure the house you looked at that day was haunted. Every night El would bring up her fun weekend with the Mike and the others, and how she was excited to see them again the next weekend. It was nice she had something to look forward to after working so hard all week, and seeing them always helped motivate her to keep working hard the next week.

After dinner you would usually keep working with her, but on a handful of occasions you had decided she was doing well or needed a break--so the three of you would watch a movie instead. You had felt a bit awkward staying when you knew your job was technically done, but El and Hopper both insisted you'd earned a break too. Eventually El would get tired and go off to bed, leaving you alone with Hopper. At first, you'd decided it was best to just leave; you were only there to tutor El, so when she was asleep you technically had no real reason to stay. After few nights however, Hopper started asking you for updates on how El was doing before you left. That's always how the conversations started out, but inevitably you'd move on to other topics and before you knew it you'd end up staying until 11:00 every night, just sitting around talking and enjoying each other's company.

Your feelings for Hopper had gone from a simple crush to full-on adoration. You were well past simply "liking" him, though you were still hesitant to say that you were in love. You had pieced together more of Hopper's past through tidbits he would let slip sometimes, as well as the gossip you heard from the real estate agent and homeowners you met house hunting. You knew that he'd been a cop in New York, that he was married before, and you knew about his

daughter, Sara, and what had happened to her. Your admiration for him only grew, knowing he'd been through something like that, and yet he was still willing to open up his heart again and take in El, genuinely thinking of her as his own daughter. He was trying so hard to do what was best for her, to give her the best life he could, and it made your heart swell every time you thought about him.

Despite your obviously growing feelings, you hesitated to act on them. You had never been as confident around men as Karen was; you weren't particularly popular in high school, and the few relationships you'd had in Indianapolis had all ended poorly. Not to mention that you were really only spending so much time together because you were tutoring his daughter; you knew it was inappropriate to want more from your relationship given that fact. Besides that, what if you did try to initiate something, only to have him turn you down? Things would be so awkward, and you didn't want to risk losing what you had with him and El now by trying to make it something more. If Hopper had any romantic feelings for you, which you suspected--or maybe just hoped--he did, he seemed to be doing much the same as you. He smiled at you, laughed at your jokes, and was always kind to you, but he never tried anything; always sure to keep you at a comfortable distance.

In the middle of your fourth week in Hawkins, you finally closed on a house. It was an older craftsman-style home within walking distance to the high school. With three bedrooms it was bigger than you needed, but having a few guests rooms couldn't hurt and it was still within your budget. Much to your disappointment, you had to skip tutoring El for a few days to get all your things moved from your apartment in Indianapolis to your new home. Hiring movers had made things a lot easier, but unpacking everything took ages and you were totally exhausted by the end of it. You definitely didn't have enough furniture for such a big place but it was a start, and you had what you needed to get by. It was also nice to finally sleep in your own bed again.

It was Friday by the time you'd managed to get things in order. You were starting your new job on Monday, and you were glad you thought ahead enough to do your lesson plans early. Now you had the weekend to adjust a bit and relax. Even though it had only been a

few days, you missed seeing El and Hopper. You had seen them both nearly every day for the past month, and their absence was noticeably upsetting. You decided to go out on a limb a bit and invited them both over for dinner Saturday; saying it would be nice for them to see the house in case you ever needed to tutor El there. Hopper had agreed instantly, saying they were both looking forward to it.

Not being the greatest cook, you decided to consult Karen on what would be best. Despite her earlier apprehension about your feelings for Hopper, she had grown to accept them after seeing how happy you were spending time with him. She gave you some recipes and tips, which you appreciated, before making a comment about a way to a mans heart and all that, which was less appreciated. You reminded her El would be there, and she just smiled a shrugged, saying you never know what might happen. Despite your best efforts to be cool about the whole thing, you spent your whole Saturday preparing for dinner: choosing your outfit, cleaning up the mess leftover from unpacking, showering, rearranging the furniture(because somehow it didn't look quite right), changing your mind about the outfit and picking another one, stress-baking, moving the furniture back after realizing it looked better the original way, taking another shower because you were sweaty from moving the furniture around, fixing your hair and makeup, then finally cooking the meal. By dinnertime you felt like you'd run a marathon, and even after all your efforts throughout the day you still felt nervous.

The doorbell rang, and you felt your stomach do a somersault. You took a few deep breathes, before opening the door, seeing Hopper standing on the other side. Alone.

"H-hi." You said, a nervous smile overtaking your face.

"Hey." He replied, smiling back.

"Where's El?" You asked, looking around.

"Well, funny thing; Karen called about an hour ago, saying she was getting the kids together for a pizza party sleepover at her house tonight. The whole thing seemed pretty sudden, actually." He said, giving you a somewhat questioning look. Your jaw dropped; what

was Karen thinking? Of course she would choose to meddle now that she approved of the relationship; and you honestly weren't sure if you were angry or happy about it.

"Oh, I had no idea; Karen didn't mention anything like that to me when I talked to her yesterday." You tried to not sound suspicious, not wanting him to think you'd somehow arranged this whole thing to be alone with him.

"El was looking forward to seeing you, but it's hard to compete with a pizza party." He said, before looking down at his boots. "I uh, hope it's alright that I came anyway? I mean it was short notice and I didn't want you to have gone to any trouble for nothing."

"Oh no, it's totally fine." You smiled, a slight blush rising on your face. You moved aside and gestured for him to come inside. You smelled cigarettes and cologne as he past; did he normally wear cologne? He took off his coat and hat, hanging them up as he looked around.

"This is a nice place." He said approvingly.

"Thanks. I'm still getting used to it but it's definitely nicer than my old apartment. I'm going to have to invest in some more furniture though; I'm not used to having this much space to fill." You replied.

"It's better than having the opposite problem; sleeping on what's basically a cot in the living room worked for awhile, but for my back's sake I think we may have to start looking into getting us a bigger place soon." He replied, stretching out his back for dramatic effect. You laughed, but couldn't help noticing the way his shirt sleeves hugged his arms as he stretched.

"Well I've toured every house in Hawkins that's for sale right now; if you need help looking let me know."

"I may take you up on that." He smiled at you and you smiled back.

You had missed this comfortable silence the past few days. It was almost soothing being with someone and knowing there's no obligation to speak. Of course, it gave you a moment to think and

you suddenly realized you were alone--like really, actually, honest-to-goodness alone. No kids down stairs, no El in the next room--just the two of you together in your big new house. Your comfortable silence suddenly began to fill with a tension that hadn't been there before. Hopper had clearly felt the shift in mood, and his blue eyes gazed over at you with a new, intense look. You turned around quickly, willing yourself not to blush.

"Um, the dining room is just over here." You said nervously, not looking back at him.

You had already laid out the food on your small, wooden dining table before he'd arrived; you'd made pork chops, peas, mashed potatoes, rice, and an apple pie for dessert. It would have been a little much for three people, even with Hopper's appetite, but for just the two of you it was clearly overkill. You sat across from each other, your conversation light and pleasant, but the tension still lingered between you despite your efforts to ignore it. He complimented your cooking, talked about the house, your job, and of course about tutoring El. You wanted to keep tutoring her daily, saying she was doing well but still needed a lot of help to catch up in time. You expected him to protest like he had before, but to your surprise he just agreed before taking another bite of mashed potatoes.

He was acting different, and you weren't sure if he was being more honest or holding himself back. He seemed to be genuine with everything he said, but he wasn't as talkative, and his replies were simple and to the point. You tried to stay pleasant as you continued to talk, but you felt a vice tightening around your chest as the night went on. Once you finished eating, you offered him some of the leftovers to take home, to which he agreed to take before excusing himself to the bathroom. As soon as he exited the room, you left out a breath you didn't know you'd been holding.

As you filled up the tubberware with food, your inner monologue was bleak. You knew you'd messed up; it was your fault the mood changed, then you just tried to ignore it and made it a thousand times worse. Maybe he took you turning away as a sign you weren't interested? Did he think it was your way of silently rejecting him? Was that why he was so quiet all through dinner? Or maybe he had only just now realized you had feeling for him, and he was trying to

seem distant to let you down gently? The more you thought about it the less sure you were about what he was feeling, but you did know one thing: despite all your efforts to avoid it, you had totally made things awkward.

You were so focused on filling the containers with food and cursing yourself silently you didn't hear him walk into the kitchen. Your face showed your concern as you wondered if it wouldn't be best to just tell him your feelings; at this point could it do anymore damage? He watched you silently for a few moments, his own thoughts going just as fast as yours. You caught sight of him out of the corner of your eye and jumped slightly.

"Oh, Hopper. I didn't hear you come in." You said, you smiled as your hand went to your chest, your heart raced from being startled. He stared at you silently, a contemplative look on his face. You shifted under his gaze, but worked up the courage to keep talking. "Um, actually I was hoping we could maybe talk? I--" Before you had a chance to say anything more, he'd crossed the kitchen in a few long strides, his big hands clasping your shoulders as he bent down and kissed you.

You hardly had time to process what was happening before your body naturally reacted; your arms wrapping around his back as you pulled him in closer. Your kiss deepened as his hands moved up to cup your face. You broke apart and instantly came back together. You had to lean back against the counter for the support your weak knees were no longer giving you. You shifted from longer, deeper kisses into short passionate ones until you felt like you could hardly breathe. He pulled back suddenly after what seemed like ages, though you knew it could have only been a few moments. He stared down at you as you looked up at him, catching your breath as you tried to sift through the remains of your muddled brain for something to say.

"y/n, I'm sorry if you, I mean if that wasn't--Jesus this was all planned out a lot better in my head." He said, moving his hands from your face, one moving up to smooth back his hair. You looked up at him as you patiently waiting for him to get his thoughts together.

"I've never been very good at, well at expressing myself. It's just, ever

since you got here I've just felt--everything has been so much better, you know? There's been a lot going on here in the past year that's made everything so complicated, but when you're around it's like I can breathe again; I feel like I can finally move past it. That first night, sitting and talking with you--I mean you were so kind, and you're beautiful, and smart, and funny; but then you're still so young--I just never thought you'd be interested in a guy like me. And then all this time we've spent together, I just kept telling myself you were doing it for El and it wouldn't be right for me to assume there was anything more." He stopped suddenly. All the time he was talking, he was looking down at the floor, but now his eyes moved up to meet yours and you could hear the conviction in his voice. "But I do want this to be more; I have feelings for you, strong ones, and I can't keep acting like I don't. I know I'm being selfish, and I know I don't deserve you; but if there's even the slightest chance that you might feel the same I just, well I just had to get my feelings out there."

"Jim." You looked up at him, trying to find the right words. You had never received a confession like that before, so genuine and honest, and every word had made your chest ache. You could barely believe that he didn't think he was good enough for you; if anything you thought it was the other way around. And that he was so unsure of himself that he was still questioning your feelings after what had just happened made your heart hurt. Your feelings for him were just as strong and you wanted him to know that. Without thinking, you pulled him down and kissed him, long and sweet. He was clearly surprised, but in an instant his arms were around you, holding you tightly as you felt his lips smiling against yours.

After lots of kissing, you two finally separated from each other and moved into the living room to talk. There was, after all, an awful lot to talk about. You snuggled into him as you both admitted you'd had feelings for each other since the first night, laughing at how stupid you both were for having waited so long to talk about it. You talked about El; Hopper was sure she would be happy, but you were still nervous to tell her. You agreed you should keep the romance to a minimum when she was around, at least for now while she was adjusting to the idea. Then there was Mike; you knew he was going to hate it, and you both decided it would be better if you told him on

your own; a conversation you were not looking forward to.

After that you talked about the logistics; work schedules, dinners, time spent with El. You worked up a schedule for dinners and tutoring, hoping alternating houses would make it easier for you to still see them everyday now that you were working. Then you moved on to other topics, like how your last relationships hadn't gone well and how you were still insecure because of that, how it had been a long time since Hopper had even considered the idea of having a serious relationship again, and how you both wanted to take things slow as you each adjusted to this new situation. You sat and talked for hours, until finally you felt yourself drifting off, head laid softly against his chest. You felt his whole body shake as he laughed softly.

"I think that's my cue." Running his hands through your hair one last time before guiding you to sit up.

"You can stay for a little longer, can't you?" You looked up at him, eyes drowsy. He smiled, leaning down to kiss you slowly.

"Nah, I better not." He replied, despite your exhaustion you managed to still find the energy to pout. He laughed again, smiling down at you. "But hey, I'll see you tomorrow?" You relented with a sigh, before smiling up at him.

"Alright; see you tomorrow."

4. Chapter 4

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey Hopper fans, it's me, yah girl. Sorry it's been a minute; between holiday junk, being sick, and my birthday(which is TODAY homies ((the 23rd of December for those reading this in the future)) so send me birthday messages! ...please, I need friends) I've been SWAMPED with stuff IRL(but let's get real, y'all know I wouldn't have updated any sooner even if I literally had nothing else going on)

Thanks once again for all the amazing feedback; I got a HUGE response from the last chapter and it just really gives me the warm fuzzies seeing so many people reaching out to me and telling me how much they liked the story. It makes it worth all the time spent writing when I know people are actually enjoying it.

Info for future chapters: I wasn't really planning for this to get smutty but dang if it don't look like that's the road we're headed down my friends. Please bear with me on this; I'm still new to the smut game and honestly y'all it takes me DAYS to get through writing one chapter of smut because I have to pause and question like all my life choices every time I write a sexual word like I write the word 'cock' and suddenly I'm praying for the first time in 26 years to sweet baby Jesus for my mortal soul like I'm so sad what's wrong with me I'm 26 not 12 smh. I wanted this story to be straight fluff and I'm sorry if you didn't want there to be smut but here we are(let's be real though y'all thirsty AF I'm sure that's exactly what you wanted. I mean that's what I've been reading too imma be honest with you; happy birthday to me, amiright? *insert Dustin's purring sound here*)

Anywho; this whole story has gotten bigger than I originally planned, but if I keep thinking of stuff to write and you guys keeping enjoying it I guess I'll keep writing it? ㄟ(ˉ_ˉ)ㄏ Also, I have another Hopper series idea that I actually had prior to this(cause this was SUPPOSED to be a one-shot) and I've mulled over the idea of starting it up too(cause I'm clearly a masochist). It's more serious than this one with like a for-real plot and everything; there would obviously be fluff cause yah know me, but there would def be more smut, and it would prolly be hella angsty too. So If that sounds like something you're interested in let me know!

You ushered El from the cold winter air into your warm, crowded living room. She immediately removed her coat as the gang looked up, greeting her enthusiastically as she took a seat beside Mike. You smiled, setting down your school bag before removing your own coat and hanging it up on the overloaded coat rack. The kids talked and laughed amongst themselves as you headed into the kitchen to check the food simmering in slow cooker. All looking well, you headed back into the living room.

"Okay, you know the drill; you get an hour, then El has to start her tutoring. I mean it." You said, pointing at them before heading to get your bag off the floor.

"We know aunt y/n." Mike said, rolling his eyes before going back to his conversation. You pulled out a large stack of papers from your bag as you look over at him pensively. He was, as expected, very unhappy with the Hopper situation; you got the feeling that he had some other, deep-rooted reason for disliking Jim, but so far you hadn't been able to figure out what exactly it was. What you did know is that Mike seemed to really, REALLY not like him, and it only got worse once the two of you began dating. Mike was often short with you when he'd never been before, and he was even worse with Hopper. Still, you took solace in the fact that El seemed to be alright with it; if anything, she seemed to be enjoying the changes that came with your relationship. She liked seeing you and Hopper happy, and there was the added perk of being around her friends more.

The Monday after your dinner with Hopper, you had your first day at your new job. It had gone well for the most part, and afterwards Mike and his friends had insisted on coming over and seeing your house. Just like that, they started coming over nearly every day after school; they felt like they had more freedom without their parents around, and it was close to school and the arcade. You didn't mind, though you had been worried about El being distracted from studying. It turned out for the best though; she got to see her friends for a bit while you graded papers or worked on lesson plans, then the kids would all go home and you had time to tutor El before Hopper got off work and you all ate dinner together. Mike sometimes stayed, promising to help El with her studying, and while you weren't totally on-board with the idea to begin with--thinking it may be too distracting--you had allowed it in hopes of getting back on Mike's good side. Despite your initial apprehension, he seemed to genuinely be trying to help, and he was certainly smart enough to do so, so you decided there was no harm in letting him stick around a few nights a week.

Initially, you and Hopper had planned to alternate houses; one night you'd head to the cabin to tutor El and eat dinner, then the next night you'd bring her to your house and eat there. However, it didn't take long for that plan to get derailed. With the kids coming over so frequently, El clearly liked being at your house with them rather than in the cabin, and so within the first week you all naturally shifted to spending every evening at your place. You were just happy to spend time with them, and since El seemed to not only adjust to the idea quickly, she also clearly preferred it, you didn't see a problem. Hopper didn't seem to mind either; being a small town and having your house right in the middle of it, you weren't far from the station or anywhere else he might be during the day, so it was convenient for him to just come over straight after work.

It had only been a few weeks, but your relationship with Hopper was going well. You were both adjusting to being in a relationship again; him even more so than you, having been a bachelor for so long. While you both had strong feelings for one another, the two of you thought it was best take things slow for now. When El was around, you kept the affection to a minimum, but even when the two of you were alone Hopper made sure to never take things too far; even when

he was over on the weekends he never stayed the night, not even just to sleep. You knew he was probably trying to hold himself back for your sake, but there was always that little voice in the back of your head saying maybe he just wasn't as interested as you'd thought he was. You tried to ignore any nagging, negative emotions and just live in the moment; you and Hopper were happy, and that's all that mattered.

You were working on grading your last stack of homework when the front door opened, letting in a cold burst of air as Hopper made his way inside. You looked at the clock; it was definitely too early for him to be done with work already. El jumped up from her seat next to Mike, who you couldn't help but notice was scowling, to walk over to Hopper and give him a hug.

"Hey kid." He said, smiling as he ruffled her hair.

"You're early." You said, getting up from the table while El detached herself from him to go back to her seat. You walked over and, standing on your tiptoes, gave him a quick peck on the cheek. It was an innocence, sweet action, and Hopper looked down giving you a loving smile, which you reciprocated. You heard a mixture of quiet groans and snickering from the kids behind you, but chose to ignore--you were pretty used to it at this point--as you took another few seconds to enjoy looking at the bright blue of his eyes before he spoke again.

"Yeah; Flo made me leave--said I was sick and I should go home and rest." He said, taking off his jacket and hat. "I told her I was fine, but the old women's persistent." Without really thinking, you reached up and placed the back of your hand on his forehead while your other hand moved up to your own forehead. Despite having just come from the chilly, winter air his forehead definitely felt hot.

"Hmmm, you do feel pretty warm." You observed.

"I don't need you fussing over me; I'm a grown man." He replied, shooing your hand away. You couldn't help but notice his already slightly-flushed cheeks got a shade redder. You smiled to yourself; he was so darn cute sometimes, not that you would ever dare tell him that.

"You're a grown man with a fever. Flo was right, as usual; you need to rest." You said, grabbing his hat and jacket out of his arms and setting the absently on the table. "Lucky for you I made soup today. It should be ready by now; I'll fix you a bowl and then you can go lay down."

"I'm don't need any rest and I don't need you babying me--and besides, you're blowing this way out of proportion; I'm not even sick." He replied defensively, crossing his arms. Despite what he said, now that you got a better look at him you could tell he wasn't feeling well. He was sweating, his nose and cheeks were flushed, and you could see him wobble slightly in place. It was probably just a cold--it was that time of year--but you were sure he was still feeling pretty terrible. You decided if he wasn't going to take care of himself you would have to do it for him; even if you had to make him listen.

"I deal with kids all day, everyday; I know what a cold looks like when I see one Jim Hopper." You said, using your stern teacher voice. "You know you're only going to make it worse by being stubborn. So you're going to sit down there, you're going to take some medicine, eat your soup, and then you're going to go lay down and rest--and if you still decide you want to act like a child and refuse to admit you're sick, I'll call Flo over here and she can lecture you all evening until you give in and start taking care of yourself like the grown man you claim to be."

You had never really put your foot down about anything with Hopper up until this point, so he was clearly surprised. You expected he would want to fight you out of principle, or because he was acting childish and grumpy from being sick, but after a moment of silent deliberation he sat down at the table without a word.

"Good boy." You said with a smile. Despite feeling bad that he felt sick, you couldn't help but rub it in a little. You heard a long, impressed whistle from behind you and turned around to see Dustin looking over at you both. You'd completely forgotten they were all still here, and they were all looking at you with newfound respect and surprise.

"Damn, that was impressive." Dustin said, shaking his head in approval.

"She can be pretty scary when she wants to be." Will half-whispered to Mike, who look totally stunned.

"No kidding; glad I'm not the one in trouble." Lucas said. Max and El shook their heads in unison, agreeing completely. You realized this was probably pretty embarrassing for Hopper, and despite the fact that he was acting childish and needed that stern talking-to, you decided to give him a bit of a reprieve.

"And what about all of you? It's been over an hour; amscray! Or do you want me to give you all extra homework like El?" You asking, gesturing towards the door. They all shot up, shuffling to get there things together and hastily saying their goodbyes. Will headed home with Mike, while Max and Dustin went off to Lucas's house, leaving you, Hopper, and El alone in your house. Things suddenly very quiet, you set to work getting Hopper taken care off.

You told El to review her homework from the day before, then went and made Hopper a steaming bowl of vegetable soup. He mumbled a thank you as you placed the bowl in front of him, clearly pouting. It was honestly adorable how he was acting like a little kid, but once again you didn't really feel the need to tell him that. You took a blanket off the couch and threw it around his shoulders before going off to locate the cold medicine. You knew you had some somewhere in the house, but having been there less than a month it was hard to remember where you'd stored everything. Finally finding it in an otherwise-empty cabinet in the kitchen, you brought it to Hopper along with a large glass of water. Once he'd eaten, you made sure he took the medicine and drank all the water, before filling the glass up again and showing him to your room.

You tried to contain the blush you felt rising on your face as you realized that Hopper had never been in your bedroom before. It was weird to think something that simple embarrassed you, but for some reason your relationship with Hopper always felt so high school; just simple and innocent, like you were both experiencing all this for the first time. Still, now wasn't really the time to be thinking about it. You set the glass of water down on the nightstand along with another dose of cold medicine, then pulled the covers back for him.

"There's a bathroom over there if you need it. I'll just be downstairs

with El, so just holler if you need anything. Make sure you drink plenty of water and that you stay in bed, okay? you can take more medicine in 6 hours if you need it." You said, your tone more concerned than commanding.

"Thanks sweetheart." He said, walking over to kiss you on the top of your head, then quickly pulling back. "Oh, guess I should limit the contact, huh? I'd hate for you to get sick too." You smiled up at him, pulling him down to kiss him lightly on his warm lips.

"I'll take my chances. Besides, I work around teenagers; at this point I'd like to see the cold that could get through my years of built-up immunity."

He chuckled as he pulled you in, holding you against his chest as he leaned down to plant another kiss in your hair. He was radiating heat, and you felt your heart ache a bit, knowing how bad he must be feeling. "Anyway, promise me you'll get some sleep?" You said, pulling away slowly to look up at him your hands to on his sides.

"Promise." You smiled at each other for a moment, but you could feel him swaying slightly in your grip and knew it would be better to leave him quickly so he could rest. You headed towards the door, only to look back and see him struggling with the buttons on his shirt. You hesitated for a moment, contemplating leaving now and pretending like you didn't see so you could avoid any potential awkwardness, but in the end your conscience got the better of you. You turned back around and headed over to him, pushing your hand past his struggling fingers as you started to undo the buttons.

"Here, let me help you." You said, focusing all your attention on getting your task done quickly. You didn't look up at him, but you could feel him watching you as your hands worked their way down his shirt. He was wearing a shirt underneath, so it's not like he was shirtless, but the combination of things--the location, the heat pouring off him, his eyes on you, that fact you were literally undressing him--made the whole station seem very intimate and embarrassing. You could feel the blush across your face as you finished undoing the last button, his shirt falling open.

"There, all finished." You said, looking at the ground.

"I think you missed one." He said, his voice low.

"Huh?" Surprised you looked up and met his gaze just long enough to see his eyes glazed over--whether it was from want or just from his fever you weren't sure--before his mouth collided with yours. He kissed you hard and fast, his need making him sloppy as his lips met yours over and over. The scruff of his beard scratched your skin as he moved to deepen the kiss, his mouth opening over yours. You felt his tongue gliding over your lower lip, and you felt your body naturally react; tilting your head back to give him better access as your lips parted. A large hand buried itself in the hair at the nap of your neck as your tongues intertwined, his hot breath mingling with yours. You moaned lightly as his free hand pulled you into him, running up and down the small of your back. The heat emanating from his fevered body spilled onto you everywhere the two of you touched, and you felt a string of heat trail down your arm as his hand released your hair and worked it's way down from your shoulder. He bent down, raining kisses along your jawline before moving down to kiss your neck. The hand on your arm moved down to grab your hand, guiding it to the crotch of his pants where you could feel how hard he'd become. You gasped as your hand made contact, only a thin layer of fabric separating your palm from him, and his previous comment suddenly made sense.

"Jim." You said, gently--if not a bit reluctantly--pulling yourself away from him. You weren't sure if this outpouring of passion was from his fever or if he just had really bad timing, but either way you knew you couldn't let things go any further. He swayed slightly as he looked down at you, desire still burning in his eyes. You placed a hand on his face as you spoke, "Honey, you're sick, you need to rest; and I need to get back to El, remember?" You reasoned, giving him a soft kiss on the cheek. Hopper clearly wanted to continue, but seemed to reluctantly agree. He nodded before heading towards the bed, hands already starting to work on removing his pants. You quickly turned and headed out of the room, making sure not to look back this time lest you get yourself into more trouble.

You shut the door quietly before leaning against it, taking a few long, deep breaths to try and calm yourself down. You had started off your relationship by agreeing to take things slow; so aside from a few

weekend make-out sessions you'd never really gotten very intimate before. You personally felt ready to take things further with him, but up until now he'd always been so careful to hold himself back; so to have him act on his instincts so abruptly was a bit of a shock. Not to mention the poor timing and the fact that you were a bit annoyed that it took his brain being muddled by fever for him to finally make a move. You stood there for another moment, making sure you weren't blushing,, before finally turning around and heading back downstairs where El was waiting.

You tutored El for most of the evening, trying the whole time not to distract yourself with thinking about Hopper. You finished up and ate dinner together, talking about Mike and the others as you usually did with her, before settling down to watch a movie. You went and checked on Hopper a few times throughout the evening, always finding him sleeping soundly; and of course snoring loudly. At one point he must have woken up, as the medicine you'd left him was gone. After the movie you grabbed the extra blankets and pillows out of your guest closet and made up a bed for her on the couch since Hopper clearly wasn't going anywhere. She was out almost as soon as her head hit the pillow, and you decided to head off to bed yourself; silently praying the cold medicine would keep Hopper asleep until morning.

You quickly readied yourself for bed before gingerly crawling under the covers next to Jim. His arms naturally reacted to your presence, wrapping around you and pulling you into him. At first you thought you'd woken him up, but he seemed to still be fast asleep. You examined his face, smiling to yourself. He was so handsome, and you were glad to see the medicine seemed to be helping with his fever.

You leaned over and lightly placed kisses on his eyelids before snuggling into his chest and whispering, "I love you Jim; see you tomorrow."